

MotorMVB Global: Volleyball Awareness through Transmedia Storytelling

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

By

Parker S. Swartz

Thesis Advisor

Dr. Jennifer Palilonis

**Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana**

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Abstract

In the summer of 2018, I was invited to visit São Paulo, Brazil, to represent the United States of America in the International University Sports Federation (FISU) America Games. While I was there, I noticed the amazing stories that people from around the world had about the importance of volleyball in their lives, and I knew I needed to bring these stories to life. Partnering with the national non-profit MotorMVB, our goal is to create positive exposure for men's volleyball across the United States. We want people to learn how much of an impact volleyball has on the lives of boys and men around the globe and grow the game. This project is comprised of two main components. The first is a series of stories created from interviews with athletes from Columbia, Chile and the United States. These interviews go into depth about how volleyball has changed these young men's lives and their experiences at the FISU America Games. The second is a social media campaign that will promote these athletes' stories to a national audience.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Jennifer Palilonis for advising me through this project. Her help during this year-long journey was instrumental to the overall success of this project. Thank you to Matias Ocampo, David Beck, and Fernando Cañas Jaegar for sharing their inspiring stories. Thank you to MotorMVB for working to grow the game I love. Finally, I want to thank God for giving me the humbling opportunity to be a part of the 2018 FISU America Games and spread his glory around the world.

Process Analysis Statement

This project was born during the summer of 2018 in São Paulo, Brazil. I was a part of a volleyball team that went down to compete for the United States of America in the first-ever International University Sports Federation (FISU) America Games. Over 1,500 student-athletes from all over North America, Central America, and South America came to compete in this university version of the Pan American Games. During this amazing competition, I became friends with athletes and coaches from around the world. It was truly a cultural melting pot where sports was the common language. Athletics and connecting with people are my passions, and this event gave me an idea for a series of stories on how the sport I love, volleyball, has had an impact on people around the world.

I started my senior year taking a couple of graduate classes in the Emerging Media Design and Development master's degree program, directed by Dr. Jennifer Palilonis. The program has a working relationship with MotorMVB, a national non-profit dedicated to growing men's volleyball in the United States and founded by the Men's Volleyball Olympic Coach John Speraw. This provided an incredible platform for my stories. With the help of Dr. Palilonis, I decided that I wanted to show how transmedia storytelling can help a non-profit grassroots program like MotorMVB spread its message across the United States.

The interview process proved to be more difficult than first anticipated. First, I had to get in touch with people I thought would be great interviews for the project. Finding people that I could easily communicate with and who had great stories to tell was a longer process than I thought it would be. I eventually landed on three individuals that I thought would fulfill the goal of MotorMVB by showing how men's volleyball changed their lives. I carefully

developed a list of questions that I believed to be thought-provoking for the individuals being interviewed. These included questions about their lives growing up in their countries, how they got into volleyball, how volleyball has shaped their lives, and how the FISU America Games had affected them. I narrowed the list down to my top 10 questions and encouraged each interviewee to go into as much detail as possible in a questionnaire. I then proceeded to send out my interview questionnaire to three interviewees: Matias Ocampo, David Beck, and Fernando Cañas Jaegar. Although all the interviewees were excited to be a part of this project, it took a while for them to finish telling me their stories. It took constant contact and real relationship-building to bring this project to fruition. Eventually, I received their interview questionnaires and then did short follow up interviews to discuss particularly interesting comments and stories that they had.

After getting all the information I needed from the interviewees, I proceeded to develop themes for each individual. I connected quotes to themes like *family*, *dreams*, *determination*, and *global presence*. This gave me a creative outline to work from while thinking about how to shape these stories. I completed my first draft and Dr. Palilonis critiqued my work. We decided that the first draft felt too much like a bio rather than a story of how volleyball shaped these young men. I went back and worked on the overall flow and story transitions. I also worked on the opening paragraphs to the stories and sculpted them into insightful teasers to entice readers to read the full stories.

I will pitch the stories to MotorMVB for publication on their website. However, I wanted this project to have a target audience of male athletes ages 11 to 17 in order to show them how men's volleyball is a worldwide opportunity for community and athletic success. Again, the goal

for MotorMVB is to grow men's volleyball in the United States; so growing youth participation is a very important aspect of that. That is why I created an Instagram campaign that features each athlete and promotes their individual stories on the MotorMVB website. If approved by MotorMVB, these will be posted on their official Instagram and Facebook pages, which will redirect them to the MotorMVB website. Besides Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook are the most-used social media applications for young males (eMarketer Editors, 2018) so this will specifically target them to read the stories on these incredible athletes from around the world. I designed the Instagram and Facebook posts to highlight each athlete's home country and create excitement around the global aspect of this project. I also created a hashtag, #MotorMVBGlobal, which groups these stories into a cohesive campaign. Other hashtags used in my social media posts such as #global #travel and #studentathlete were carefully researched to find trending topics that associate with sports, the male youth population, and global sports (Hashtagify, 2019). I specifically designed the Facebook posts to have a direct link to the website, which will give people immediate access with no extra clicks. Instagram does not allow links on posts, but MotorMVB has a link to the website in their profile page. All of these things will greatly increase engagement and the amount of people that these stories will reach. The project's social media and website presence creates a transmedia storytelling platform that gives MotorMVB, a national non-profit, more opportunities to interact with and gain the attention of their target audiences across the United States.

Athlete Interview Stories

Matias Ocampo: Defying the Odds

Matias Ocampo has made a habit of proving people wrong. The doubts and criticism Matias faced throughout his life only added fuel to his fire. When it came to high level sports, he said that “a lot of people always told (him) that (he) couldn’t do it. It was more motivation for (him) to prove them wrong, and prove to (himself) that (he) could do it even if that meant that (he) had to work harder and harder every time.” After years of hard work, Matias earned the opportunity to demonstrate his dedication at the National Games of Columbia.

Although Matias’ first love was basketball, volleyball had always been an important part of his family. His family lives in Santiago de Cali, Columbia, in the Columbian state of Cauca Valley. His mother played for the state team in her youth, and two of his uncles played for the Columbian National Team. However, nothing was ever handed to him. At a young age he said he was “really short compare to (his)

teammates so (he) needed to work harder than the rest of them and earn (his) spot” on any team. By the time Matias was faced with the decision to choose between the two sports, his family had convinced him to chase after

volleyball. Matias was then recruited by the

state team after their trainer saw him play a high school exhibition game versus a college team.

His family was thrilled and have "always supported (him) with every sacrifice and decision (he)



Matias (#9) in Cartagena, Columbia with his 2010 Columbian State Team

has ever made in (his) career with words and financially," he said. The importance Matias places on family is visible at the core of Matias' character and his volleyball career.

As a 17-year-old on the state team, Matias was mostly coming off the bench during competition. Once again, he was working to prove his abilities at the next highest level of play. Matias was chosen to be a part of the state team taken to The National Games of Columbia.

The National Games are the largest sporting event

in Columbia, styled like the Olympics with all kinds of sporting events competing with the other states. In the semi-finals of the volleyball tournament, Matias found his team down 2-1 after the third game (best of 5). In the fourth set, with his team still down, Matias was called upon by his coach to come off the bench and play. Not only did he get to play the high-level match, but he led the team to a thrilling comeback to win the fourth and fifth games. Matias proudly said that the next day, "for the first time in 12 years, we took back the title."

Outside of his home country, Matias has had great success competing for Columbia in Korea, Argentina, and Brazil competing for Columbia. His recent trip to the 2018 International University Sports Federation (FISU) America Games in Brazil showed him how volleyball has affected people from all over the globe. The Olympic style event featured over 1,500 student-athletes from 13 different countries competing in 10 different sports (International University



Matias (green/black shirt) enjoying a family reunion in Villavicencio, Columbia (2017)

Sports Federation, 2018). He says it was truly fascinating "how the view of one sport changes with your country." In Brazil, volleyball is a very important and popular sport. However, men's volleyball is not as popular in other countries across the Americas. Europe is where most men's volleyball action is. Matias said his



Matias in Cartagena, Columbia competing with the U-23 National Team in the South American Championships (2016)

dream is "to play professionally in Europe. That's the ultimate goal." Volleyball has changed Matias' life forever, and he wants more people in the Americas to have opportunities to play and succeed in the sport in their home countries. He says "we can help this magnificent sport grow by helping each other with the opportunities for scholarships, international training camps, friendly travels, and more." The volleyball community is truly special, and it has helped Matias gain a broader view of the world and of himself.

David Beck: Serving a Global Community

David Beck is the youngest of six brothers from a working-class family in Maryland. Both of Beck's parents are teachers, so he says they "didn't have much money to spend on anything discretionary...but (they) found a way to make life work and stayed busy through academics, a lot of athletics, and after-school programs." Unlike many children, all six siblings chose to play men's volleyball over the abundance of sporting choices in the United States. He says, volleyball has had a profound influence on David's future career helping others achieve their dreams and has served him as a way to connect with people across the globe.



David (far right) and his brothers Seth, Tim, John, Andy, James (left to right) in 2017

In middle school, Beck was coached by USA volleyball legend Patrick Powers during several volleyball clinics. Powers is an Olympic Gold Medalist (1984), World Championship Gold Medalist (1986) and a World Beach Volleyball Champion (1987). Beck says Powers is the ultimate volleyball mentor and says, "he taught me how to play the game in a different way than a lot of people learn now." With a large volleyball family behind him and some coaching from a legend, Beck excelled in the sport. He set his high school's single-season record for kills, and by his senior year, he was a team captain. Beck impressed college scouts and was recruited to play for Grand Canyon University in the MIVA conference.

Since graduating from Grand Canyon University with a degree in sports management, Beck says his experiences as a volleyball player has provided him with amazing career opportunities. After graduation, Beck coached at Arizona Sky Club, Georgia Southern University, and is currently a volunteer assistant at the University of Virginia. He wants to pursue a career in sports because it gives him an opportunity to help other student-athletes develop into influential role models for generations to come.



Beck is currently on staff as a volunteer assistant coach at University of Virginia (2018)

As a graduate assistant at Georgia Southern University, Beck says he was faced with a difficult situation regarding a player who had “serious stressors in her life that ultimately led her to quit” the sport, he said. Beck saw some of himself in this student-athlete, so he offered her support and encouragement during this difficult time. With Beck’s encouragement, she was able to rejoin the team and complete her master’s degree at the university. This is his favorite volleyball memory because he “got to support someone during a time that was hard and be a source of meaningful change in their life,” he said. Beck has humbly established himself as a servant to the game of volleyball and its players.

Beck’s playing and coaching career have allowed him to travel across the United States and around the world. During Summer 2018, Beck played for the USA team in the International University Sports Federation (FISU) America Games in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The Olympic style event featured over 1,500 student-athletes from 13 different countries competing in 10 different sports (International University Sports Federation, 2018). He found himself playing

against top university teams from Chile, Canada, Columbia, and Brazil. Beck says there is a poetic nature to volleyball that he saw cross cultural barriers in Brazil. Beck said that whether it was an "affirmative nod to an opponent when they make a great play, (or) slapping hands...sport, in general, is a language we can all speak." Beck said that volleyball "can change us and improve us for the better" if we choose to adopt the perspective that the game is there to bring us closer as people of the earth.

In order to grow the men's volleyball game in the United States, Beck says changes are necessary at the club level. "When clubs are making ridiculous amounts of profit operating under a 501c3 and the money doesn't go back into the club for purposes of growth, that is a hard pill to swallow. Easier said than done, but volleyball has to be more accessible driven through a lower price point," he said. Beck also says that the stigma against men playing the "sissy sport" of volleyball needs to be broken. In no way, shape, or form is that stigma true of this high-flying, explosive, and energetic sport, but that is the stereotype. If volleyball can break through some of these barriers, Americans will begin to see what Europeans see in their professional volleyball leagues that sell out arenas across the continent.



Beck hoists his teammate Carter Casteel in the air at the 2018 FISU America Games.



Beck and the USA volleyball team take a post-match picture with the Brazilian volleyball team at the 2018 FISU America Games

Beck says he is “thankful for the impact volleyball has had on (his) life” and he is excited about the future opportunities that the sport is sure to present him. For now, he says will set his sights on his goal of “leading a program to victories while making meaningful change occur in athletes’ lives that help them engage with the world purposefully and courageously.” He doesn’t care where this happens as long as he is making an impact on people and the game.

Fernando Cañas Jaegar: More than a Sport

Born in Santiago, Chile, volleyball was not always Fernando Cañas Jaegar's favorite sport, because in South America, soccer – the world's most popular sport – reigns supreme. Fernando started playing soccer at a very young age, but at 13, he decided the sport did not hold his future. Still, with a deep passion for sports, Fernando chose to play volleyball. It turned out that this would be the "most important and impactful decision [he] ever made" because of the "friendships...incredible moments and experiences" that volleyball gave him, he said.

At a young age, Fernando was tested on the world stage. In 2014, Fernando was on the U19 Chilean National Team that competed in Paipa, Columbia for the South American Championships. In the third-place match, Fernando and his Chilean team were up against the heavily favored home team: Columbia. In the fourth set, in front of 2,000+ Columbia fans, Fernando buried the match-winning kill and stunned the home fans of Columbia. This third-place victory qualified the team for the World Championships, and Fernando still regards this as his most cherished volleyball memory. He

says it was an incredible moment of victory for him, his team, and his country. Volleyball has given Fernando the unique ability to travel and experience competition on a world stage. Now 21, his volleyball career has taken him to Brazil, Argentina,

Columbia, United States of America, Italy, Portugal, and Taiwan. The worldwide friendships he has made on those trips are something he will always carry with him.



Fernando and his U19 Chilean National Team at the 2014 South American Championships in Paipa, Columbia

“I consider the most important and impactful gift that volleyball has given me to be the countless people I have met and the friendships that will last forever,” he said. Through volleyball, Fernando has met teammates and friends that he considers his family. His time at the 2018 International University Sports Federation (FISU) America Games was no exception. The Olympic style event featured over 1,500 student-athletes from 13 different countries



Fernando at the 2014 School World Championships in Portugal

competing in 10 different sports (International University Sports Federation, 2018). Fernando was thrilled that the “Chilean delegation and the USA delegation were really friendly since the very beginning of the tournament. Personally, (he) tried to go to almost all the coffee meetings (Team USA) hosted,” he said. The USA volleyball and basketball teams competing at the games were organized by Athletes in Action, a Christian sports ministry that works with NCAA athletes across the United States.

This group put on coffeehouse-style meetings so people from all countries could get to know one another and share their faith. Fernando was a regular attendee where he met many new lifelong friends and found a recalling to his faith. Volleyball had once again opened up the world to him, but this time in a much more personal way due to its “incredible community,” he said.

Fernando has a pure passion for volleyball, but he realizes, like many other dynamic athletes do, that he will not be able to play forever. Fernando said that with his family’s “incredible support,” he received a 75 percent scholarship toward his college education to play

volleyball at André Bello University.

Volleyball provided him with an amazing opportunity for him to get an excellent college education for his future career in economics and financial management.

For the sport of volleyball, he also sees a confident future. Volleyball is growing in his home country, where they have now



Fernando on the coast of Punta del Este, Uruguay
(2017)

moved up to being ranked “third in South America and 22nd in the world,” he said. Fernando says that men’s volleyball can become as popular in Chile and the United States as it is in Europe if a few things can be achieved. First, there need to be more and better youth programs for boys. Second, there needs to be more media attention. Fernando knows how exciting and inspiring volleyball can be, but not enough people are exposed to the game to know that. With more exposure and a strong youth movement, he is confident men's volleyball will inspire people as it has inspired him.

Social Media Campaign

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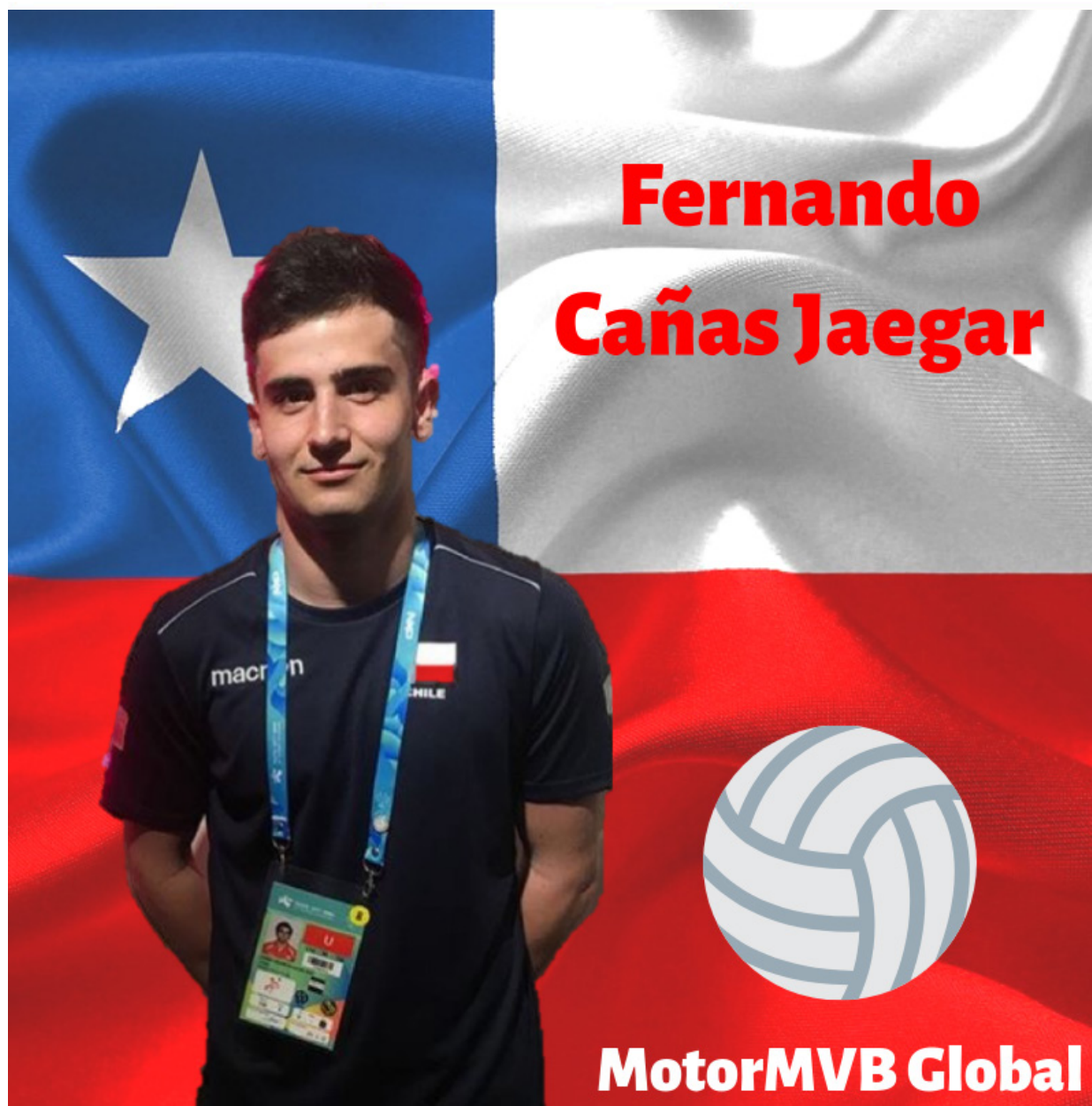


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